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ABSTRACT

Graduate students (N=72) and undergraduate seniors (N=84) enrolled in education courses were surveyed regarding their perceptions of future professional curricular needs. Comparisons between the two groups revealed a general consensus regarding practical curricular changes perceived to be necessary in professional preparation for teaching. Both groups believed that preservice teachers should begin their field experiences as early as the sophomore year. Graduates recommended emphasizing instruction in computer hardware and software use. Undergraduates felt that instructional technology presented in the freshman year would help students complete assignments in methodology courses. Graduates believed that computer literacy had already become an integral part of learning in the very early grades. Both groups concurred that interdisciplinary, team-taught classes in behavioral management, exceptionalities, and learning disorders would be more effective than conventional instruction as separate subjects. Graduates believed this should be combined with practical field experience. Both groups suggested that courses for elementary education majors should be less content oriented and be presented as broad field integrated studies emphasizing methodology and interrelationships and that, regarding multiculturalism and diversity, core curricular requirements in the social sciences should be less restrictive. Graduates with teaching experience believed that an awareness of principles and practices of school law would be useful. (SM)

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CURRICULAR CHANGES GRADUATES AND UNDERGRADUATES IN EDUCATION PERCEIVE TO BE NECESSARY IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

A Paper

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Increasing societal problems and rapid advances in technology have been prominent among factors which have had considerable impact on the curricula currently being offered in professional preparation programs for teaching. Among reflections in the literature are changes in curriculum designs with adaptive parallel blocks and utilization of diversified assessment techniques. The need for multimedia in instructional presentations has become necessary in order to address the complexities involved in teacher preparation. In general, a more collaborative effort in a broad-field approach among teacher educators has departed from the separate-subject content orientation. Readjustment in the professional area of the curriculum has appeared to replace rigid reproduction of past professional practices. In addition, alternative forms of professional curricula have been designed for nontraditional students with baccalaureate degrees other than education, in an attempt to meet the need for more qualified teachers in the classroom.

In recent years colleges of education have been confronted with a demand for courses regarding technology, classroom management, multiculturalism, and students with special needs. As reported by the National Association of Scholars in March of 1996, the percentage of mandated core credits in arts and sciences undergraduate curricula among the nation's fifty best-known colleges and universities has diminished to approximately one-third of that which was required in 1964. Specialized curricula has been revised without significantly increasing the number of fused and separate subject areas. To the contrary, the number of professional courses in teacher education has increased due to conditions existing in elementary and secondary classrooms and mandates by governing boards, even though standards set by accrediting

agencies have supported a reduction in the total number of credit hours required for a baccalaureate degree in education.

The purpose of this study was (1) to review the related literature relative to recent changes in professional curriculum in teacher education, and (2) to survey graduate and undergraduate seniors currently enrolled in education, to gain insight regarding their perceptions of future professional curricular needs.

An extensive review of the literature was pursued to ascertain national trends in formulating professional curricula. Responses of the graduates and undergraduates surveyed reflected much of which is found in the literature.

This study surveyed one-hundred fifty-six graduates and undergraduates majoring in education; graduate students (72) with teaching experience enrolled in seminars in curriculum and instruction, and seniors (84) in their final semester completing professional education requirements prior to student teaching. A comparison of perceptions between the two groups of students revealed a general consensus regarding practical curricular changes perceived to be necessary in professional preparation for teaching.

Both graduates enrolled in seminars in curriculum and instruction, and undergraduates in their final semester before student teaching, perceived that students in education should begin their field experiences as early as the sophomore year. This adjustment to present observational/participation practices would make more relevant the instruction received in college classrooms. Graduates recognized instruction in utilization of computer hardware and software should be emphasized. The undergraduates felt that instructional technology, if presented in their freshman year, would assist them in completion of assignments in

methodology courses. The graduates responded with a realization that computer literacy had already become an integral part of learning in the very early grades. Programmed instruction, enrichment and remediation activities, gaming, and use of the internet with laptop computers, are currently being used in the classroom.

Both graduates and undergraduates concurred that interdisciplinary team-taught classes in behavioral management, exceptionalities, and learning disorders would be more effective as opposed to conventional instruction as separate subjects. Additionally, the graduates ascertained this area of the curriculum should be combined with practical field experience, and more instruction should be given regarding classroom management and daily routines and responsibilities using realistic simulations and case studies.

With reference to methods and materials of instruction, both graduates and undergraduates reported courses for elementary majors should be less content oriented and should be presented as broad-field integrated studies emphasizing methodology and interrelationships.. Also cited was the desire for more collaboration among instructors of education methods courses.

With regard to multiculturalism and diversity in the classroom, the graduates and undergraduates were of the opinion that core curricular requirements in the social sciences should be less restrictive. A broader selection of above-sophomore-level elective social sciences could enhance the opportunity to learn more about diversity in the classroom.

In view of the fact that public schools are looked to for solutions to challenges derived from complex societal needs and legalities, the graduates with teaching experience were also of the opinion that an awareness of principles and practices of school law would be most useful.

The literature reflects this information is currently available only in sophomore level introduction to education survey courses.

In conclusion, while data gathered for this study were not treated statistically, perceptions of the graduates and undergraduates majoring in education, and reflections in the literature, provided valuable insight regarding curricular changes believed to be necessary in the professional preparation of teachers.

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